

Interview #22

Date: 3/06/06

Location: Cape May, New Jersey

INTERVIEW:

RES: The first questions we ask are pretty simple, to try and get a handle on who you are. So how old are you?

I: I'm 58.

RES: So you were born in?

I: 1947.

RES: Where were you born?

I: Cape May.

RES: Lived here your whole life?

I: Yup. Well I went away after high school. I was up in New Bedford for a couple of years.

RES: Scalloping, or?

I: Dragging.

RES: How big a family did you come from?

I: All my family have been fishermen. My family come from Norway.

RES: Were you born in Norway? No, you were born in Cape May.

I: I was born here. All my uncles, everybody fished in my family. My mother's parents, they had three girls and a son. The girls all married fisherman, the son was a fisherman. My grandfather came here from Finland in 1908.

RES: To Cape May?

I: To Wildwood. My father came here from Norway in 28. He was a fisherman.

RES: Your grandfather on your mother's side

I: On my mother's side.

RES: She's Finnish

I: She's Finnish. My father was a fisherman over in Norway. He was a [dory] fisherman. So they used to..

RES: Ground fish? Cod?

I: They used to cod fish off of Greenland.

RES: Okay, off the big []; so he would have a lot in common with the Newfoundland guys.

I: Probably, that's what he done anyway. I guess he had, after one of his trips, I don't know how long he was there, after two three months, I guess, when we came back he had two letters in the mail. He had, he was accepted for immigration in the States and the other one was to report to the military. So he left Norway.

RES: I think I'd probably do the same thing. (Laughter)

I: He left Norway, he ended up here, he was a fisherman though. Where ever he went that's what he done, fished. I'm third generation fishing.

RES: When did you actually start?

I: I started steady after graduation in 1965 from high school.

RES: So you graduated high school, that's actually one of the questions, how much education you were able to get. Did you every do any specific training?

I: When I went up to New Bedford in probably 67, 66; they had a fishery school there. I was enrolled into that. It was just kind of hands on, teach you how to mend and.

RES: Twine?

I: Twine, yea.

RES: Are you married?

I: Married.

RES: Do you have any kids?

I: Two kids.

RES: Are they into fishing?

I: No, I'm the last of the Mohicans. All my cousins and all, they all went on to different careers.

RES: Nobody interested in fishing?

I: They probably weren't interested. You know fishing years ago wasn't a big deal. It was just a way of life and all and I liked it. I don't know, probably at the time, it's a lot of work, if you're going to be married you have to have a woman that understands it too. You're not home. Even from Cape May in the summer, I'd leave here in May and come back in September with the boat; cause we used to go ground fishing. Not that I'd even come home, but the boat was gone that long. Then we'd be back here for the winter months. Flounder, porgies, things like that. L But I was always up there ground fishing, yellow tail.

RES: Have you always been a dragger man?

I: Yea, in the early 70's, that's when I started going scalloping. My main reason for scalloping then was so that I didn't have to go up there. I was getting tired of being away. So then we worked out of Cape May.

RES: So when you first started. Let me back up a step. Your current job status is what owner/operator of this?

I: Yea

RES: The XXXX is the only vessel that you have.

I: No, I took over my father's boat after he passed and then I bought a steel boat. The was my first scallop boat, that was in 72. That was called the XXXX.

RES: You said you started fishing full time around.

I: 1965.

RES: What were you fishing on then?

I: It was a boat called the XXXX.

RES: Where was that at?

I: Cape May.

RES: What kind of fishery was that in?

I: It was mostly porgies, flounder. Like I said in the summer times we went ground fishing, yellow tail, cod fish.

RES: It was dragging?

I: Dragging.

RES: How long were you on that vessel?

I: I was on there since 65, I was captain in 68 and we sold it I think, I'll say in 76.

RES: That was called the XXXX

I: That was the XXXX

RES: Then what happened in 76.

I: Then I bought a steel boat, it was called the XXXX.

RES: What kind of fishery was that in?

I: That was strictly scallop.

RES: What made you change at that time?

I: I didn't have to go up to New England for the summer.

RES: So it was a life style choice in a way.

I: Yea and it was probably a little bit more productive. The industry was starting to pick up there.

RES: Scallops were plentiful at that time.

I: Yea, and there wasn't that many boats into it either.

RES: So is that, why did you, if there weren't as many boats into it, were people starting to feel good, the ones that were in to it?

I: The ones that were in to it were slightly more [], it was more productive the same fishing at the time. I was also being home, I wasn't into Newport and New Bedford and things like that. When I built this boat in 1980.

RES: What fishery was this originally engaged in?

I: It was built for scalloping but I also did a lot of fishing with it also.

RES: Has that been true all the way through?

I: Up until probably the last four years, maybe 5 years I haven't been dragging with this boat.

RES: So, since about 2000 straight scallops?

I: Yea. When I had this boat, when I went dragging we would go dragging say November to May. Most of my fishing was flounder fishing, fluke. Then they came with all these regulations and the states' quotas and all like that. It got to the point now that even New Jersey, will be allowed to tax 1500 pounds a week or 3000 pounds a week of flounder. It's not worth it. Come February and all most of my flounder fishing would be up in New England. Then when Rhode Island came with their quotas it wasn't worth for me to go up to New England, up on George's Banks, flounder fishing, cause, hell, I can't work on 1500 pounds, 1000 pounds fish, 300 pound, whatever crazy quota.

RES: When did that start coming in?

I: The quotas? I can't remember, probably in the mid-90's. I'd be up on George's Banks flounder fishing, NJ was closed for fluke, I also got a Carolina permit, a Virginia permit. We were running three days from George's Banks, down to Moorhead City, N.C., just to unload. Then two days back here, get ready in another day or two and go back up and do it again.

RES: That's a lot of steaming.

I: That's a lot of steaming. You know the trips were still all right, but they screwed it up. Every state's got their own quota. I'm catching in New England waters and unloading in N.C.

RES: That doesn't make a whole lot of sense.

I: It really doesn't.

RES: So your fluke ground; were you fluking all the way from 1965 on to...

I: Oh, I was fluking with this boat in the winters, after I had it built, probably after the second year, so maybe in 82 probably I was dragging with this boat.

RES: Then you stopped that by 2000. More or less.

I: Yes. I'm going to stay it's because of the trip limits and all the [] involved.

RES: When you started in 1982 were there any regulations at all that affected you?

I: No.

RES: What was the first one that you remembered?

I: I guess it was flounder that started the first one. That was probably in the early 90's.

RES: What were you engaged in at that point? Scalloping, it was reefer scalloping?

I: I was always scalloping in the summer from say May to November and then I would drag it from November to May. It gave us a nice break to because we used to be 13 men scalloping. It was a nice little break off, cause then we'd go 5 men, didn't have the big crews.

RES: You liked that?

I: Yea, it was a change. It was a little change from babysitting. A lot of babysitting. You know 13 men, 12 men other than myself.

RES: How did you like the actual fishing part of it; scalloping versus dragging; being on deck that kind of thing?

I: Probably, I liked dragging better.

RES: Why? I head that from guys before.

I: I don't know, it's more of a challenge to it, you fish and all. Scalloping is more routine, it's around the clock and it's more like production work, it's none stop. Dragging is different. I traveled more when I was dragging too. I could go around here looking for flounder and the next thing I know it, I'm up in New England.

RES: And you liked that?

I: Yea, I kind of liked it.

RES: I've heard that from guys up in Newfoundland; they've gone from ground fish to mostly to either crabbing or shrimping and say they just don't find it quite as interesting. You're just kind of throwing the net over the back and dragging away.

I: Well there's more excitement, because fishing you can get, and you can get big [] scalloping too, but you're going from starvation, until you find these fish, and when you find them, the excitement is.

RES: That's the part of the feast and the famine.

I: You got it.

RES: Going back to when you started in the early 60's. What was the fishing community like here in Cape May?

I: It was all owner operator, the boats. It wasn't that big of a fleet in Cape May.

RES: What would you guess how many vessels?

I: Probably no more than a dozen. But then you had your day boats too, your small draggers that went into the bay and off of the beach and all. I'll say a dozen.

RES: By a dozen you mean larger vessels?

I: Well, larger were probably 75-80 feet. Those were a big boat then.

RES: How big is the XXXX?

I: 95

RES: You described what you were engaged in, is that what most of the boats were doing around here at that time?

I: In the 60's? Oh yea, they were dragging. Nobody really scalloped out of Cape May. If they did, they done it in summertime.

RES: That was just sort of gravy kind of fishery, like people didn't depend on it, or did they?

I: I think they had to go mostly to New England to do it. In [] the summers are always slow, there wasn't much going on. You pretty much had to go up to New England whether you were going to go ground fishing, or wreck fishing or whatever. It was only guys; they didn't like to go scalloping that much. I think it was because of the bigger crews and all. So they shied away from them.

RES: And what species were you going after in the 60's, when you were dragging?

I: Those flounder and porgies and squid.

RES: []

I: Long ago.

RES: Butterfish?

I: Butterfish was the big fishery around here in the summer time. That's what ever body done.

RES: What was the season around like, starting in the beginning of when you said it was a (? Book #119). Not so hot in the summer, but, say starting in the winter what would you be going after?

I: Then in the fall we start porgies, but then again we'd be up in New England and we'd follow porgies back down the line. We spent a lot of time in New England,

RES: Where were you landing at that time?

I: Probably Newport, R.I. We jumped around Newport, sometimes Port Judith. Probably Newport most of the time. We stayed away from [New Bedford].

RES: What made you decide where to land? Price, or?

I: I'm going to say convenience. I don't know if you're familiar with Newport, it's a nice town.

RES: I know it now; I don't know what it was like...

I: You're docked right in the middle of the city. My father dealt with a fish company there, so, I grew up knowing him, I know him now, I feel comfortable there. So, it's like a second home, it's a home away from home.

RES: There was a family connection really there, or kinship kind of connection. What about, did the fishermen in Cape May, were they a tight group, would they socialize together or hang out together or was it a bunch of independent kind of people?

I: There's always that, yea, they hung around. Well, you had your little cliques.

RES: I know what you mean by cliques, but how did they work in the fishing crew?

I: In a group you're always trying to stick it to some body, but as a whole, they weren't too bad, because

you had your smaller boats, they kind of hung together. When I say smaller, 50-60 per boat. Then when you got into the 75-80 per class, of course we []. So you had your three, four, five, six guys that kind of exchange information.

RES: Did you exchange a lot of information?

I: Yea, well, yea.

RES: I'm really interested in how; it's kind of a tension between competing and collaborating...

I: Well if you're looking for porgies, that's a school fish. You need help to find them. So, you got your few boats scattered around, so maybe you hit a good [], so maybe you're not so quick to put it on the radio till you get another one, cause you wanted to make sure you had a little jump on your buddy next boat.

RES: But, it could be you next time..

I: Yea and it was.

RES: So you gotta make sure you call them eventually?

I: Yea, you got to. You say, it looks like good sign of fish there, but I had a hole, we lost them. You have to cover your butt.

RES: Is that the same way it is now?

I: It probably is, but I haven't been dragging for so long, I've gotten away from it. Scalping is, I work with one boat real close and that's []. He and I work good together.

RES: You're kind of like a team?

I: Yea.

RES: What's the relationship between you guys, just friends?

I: Just friends.

RES: He's not related to you at all. What about politically, were any of the fishermen organized politically? Any kind of fishermen's group or support?

I: Nothing. We were all independents. The docks, as compared to today, fishing is getting to be big business now, with the scallops the way it is. The docks are getting more involved in buying boats and all. Like [] owner operated.

RES: What do you mean by the docks getting involved?

I: Well the docks are starting to, like Cold Spring now, they own 4 boats; Cohen has, god I don't know how many he's got - 20 boats; Long's is starting to buy boats. So really there's not that many owner operators. I don't know what we're seeing around here, a dozen tops.

RES: What do you think about that?

I: Well, you know when the docks start getting in to it; they can start controlling the prices and all. What you got to do sometimes to give them a little wake up call, you got to go back a trip up East or something and then when the guys down here, you know Charlie you're the sacrificial pig, you go up, you wind up getting 25, 30 cents more a pound then they kind of wake up here a little bit. But if the guy owns the boats and that skipper is complaining, what's the dock going to say, well, hey if you don't like it go get another

dock. I come and go as I would want, but this is my main place. Between, half way between here and New Bedford when I'm working I'll go to New Bedford or I'll go to Newport.

RES: Go back to the scallop fisher, I'm sorry the fluke fishery, when you're talking about the regulations coming on and beginning to affect you. You said that that was the first set of regulations that really started to affect your business. How did they start it at the beginning, what was the?

I: I think New Jersey was probably the first one who put a landing; you had to have the history of flounder landings.

RES: How exactly did that work? Do you recall how the specifics were?

I: Well, I'll tell you I was scalloping up in Newport, I was up there for two years, I was up there in 91 and 92. The boat stayed there for two years.. During that time there was talk, like okay New Jersey is, their implementing a landing permit, so and every body says oh you better apply and I said what's the big deal, when I get home, I got a history. So I came back, it was closed. The permit, licensing was closed, they got closed off, and I lost my product, I couldn't get a flounder permit.

RES: Even though you had been engaged in it for...

I: And I was probably one big contributors their poundage that they got their quota based on. So, okay.

RES: So this is, to make sure I'm understanding what time period you're talking about. This is when they first came up with the inner state?

I: This is when they started with the state stuff.

RES: Okay, so the states were deciding amongst themselves who was going to get what quota and NJ got theirs based on...

I: Maybe that was before the quota, maybe that was, in might have been before the quota, but NJ implemented this landing, this flounder landing permit.

RES: Basically what that said was that if you have one of these permits you can land x number of pounds in NJ.

I: Probably then you could land whatever weight you wanted because then it wasn't quite federally regulated then.

RES: But you had to have one of these permits to land in NJ?

I: In NJ. So I went flounder fishing. So then I was forced to land in Virginia.

RES: What did that do? Was that just a pain in the ass, or did that really affect you?

I: Well, it was a pain in the ass, sure. So then that made me qualify for a flounder permit in VA when they came up with the landing thing.

RES: They didn't all do it at the same time, the states?

I: Yea, but it was pretty much right after. The same thing, even Carolina, they done the same thing. So I wound up getting a landing license for flounder in Carolina and Virginia, because I wasn't allowed to back in NJ. So maybe they had it implemented, well they didn't have it implemented then, but I had a history for landing so I qualified for their permit, but it came pretty shortly after.

RES: Where were you fishing that fish?

I: Oh, I could have been fishing here, and I had to go run down to North Carolina.

RES: Within three miles, outside of three miles of fishing?

I: No, I was 40-50 miles off.

RES: Okay, so you were always off shore, in federal waters?

I: Yea. So, I came in with a trip one time, probably I was on my way to VA or Carolina, it was bad weather, so I came in here, just to get out of the weather, until the weather cleared up. So I got a hold of an attorney and because basically I went after the state to get my permit.

RES: To NJ?

I: NJ, yea. So he says, the best thing you can do is pack here, then there going to have to give you a ticket and that's going to get us into the court system. So let them start the ball game. So we did. So it went on for about almost two years. I beat them in court.

RES: So you got your permit?

I: I got my permit and it opened up the, if they had just gave me my damn permit to start with, cause I qualified, when I was up in the court I talked to the judge, I says you know you're basing NJ landings off of my production, and I don't have a permit. So he gave in and it went my way. Then it opened up the window for other guys who had missed out on that qualifying period. So then they had to, they issued a lot more licenses than they really wanted to.

RES: And then what happened?

I: And then everybody got their permit, and everything was fine.

RES: That was a good thing?

I: Well, I guess it was if you wanted your license. So then, that's when they started coming with the weight limits and the allocations, you know how much and..

RES: Well how did that work? What do you mean, what hit you first with that?

I: That's when I stopped flounder fishing because the state said okay you can land 3,000 pounds a week, or however it was. For me it was...

RES: That was a state restriction at that time?

I: That was a state restriction at that time.

RES: And they put something per week as max that you could bring in. Why did they do that? Do you remember what the reason was?

I: I guess the reason they do that and, because you got a guy like me, I go out and catch 50,000 pounds.

RES: 50? Or 15?

I: 50,000 pounds and then you got the little guy complaining, had a bad run, I couldn't go out, and he's catching all the flounder, killing off the crib.

RES: Could you not have gone to another state and landed there?

I: Yea, but then you're in that same predicament again; I'm going to run three days to go somewhere. I'll tell you the one I think has really got their act together is Carolina. They got a big allocation for the flounder but I think they have a 20,000 pound limit every ten days. So the guys from Carolina get their 20,000 pounds, then they go into Virginia for the next trip, whatever their limit is, and then they go back to Carolina.

RES: Okay, just bop back and forth?

I: Just bop back and forth. It's pretty good. Even now North Carolina is starting to think about, okay I've got a flounder landing permit in Carolina I don't use; if somebody wanted to buy that permit, you could have say 2, 3 landing permits so that you could double, triple up whatever your landing amount. I think that makes sense.

RES: So that if landing permits were saleable, you could, that's not the case in NJ?

I: I could probably transfer mine if somehow somebody wanted to buy it. But I wouldn't.

RES: So that limit on your landing in NJ, that was enough to make you leave the flounder fishing.

I: Yea, the poundage wasn't enough to make us mess with.

RES: What were you doing instead?

I: Then I done some mackerel fishing, I would do some squid fishing.

[]

RES: There was enough room, so to speak, in those fisheries, that giving up flounder wasn't the end of your fishing career.

I: Plus, I'm getting old. I didn't feel like being out there in the summer. I mean in the winter time. And now the way scalloping has been, scallops have been good the last say five years. So I'll do my scallop days now, I don't even bother going fishing. By the time you buy your gear and your nets and those things. Another thing with fishing too, it seems like you're always working on your net. You come in, they're torn up and all and then you got to pull them up in your parking lot. So, I don't bother with it anymore.

RES: And when you're getting \$11 a pound or whatever you're getting for scallops,

I: And that's right, that's the truth – its' economics. I mean, I don't have to, it's less wear and tear on my boat. Right now I'll start, I don't know if I'm going to make April 1st deadline, that's usually been my goal for the last three years, cause scallops open up March 1; I usually wait till April, now the weather is starting to warm up a little bit more. I'm done in September.

RES: So that anchor

I: Right here, I sit from September till now when we get ready.

RES: And what do you do? Do you go to Florida or you stay around here?

I: I travel, we travel. Well, I've got a project here now, I just put new engines, generators, and all, so we've been working on here since October. But yea, I go around.

RES: You put new engines into the boat?

I: Yea, we just put new engines, I put new generator.

RES: So you're not thinking about quitting any time soon?

I: I don't know. I can always get somebody to run the boat if I want. But you know if I'm only working four months a year, actually I'm working 112 days.

RES: Your limit.

I: That's my limit days at sea. So that's not too bad.

RES: What kind of scallop permits do you have? Is it full time?

I: I got full time permits.

RES: What would you be doing if the scallop fishery wasn't so good?

I: I'd still be doing it. That's my job.

RES: Do you think you would have stayed in [] or do you think you would be hitting squid harder, or mackerel, or?

I: Then I'd probably be doing some fishing. But you know, I'm 58 years old, I've put my kids through college, my house is paid, my boat is paid, so I'm not as hungry as I used to be, I don't have to be.

RES: You mentioned there was about 12 boats back in the 60's, and I forget how many you estimated in that smaller boat category, how much would you say there would be in that?

I: I don't know, there were boats in Wildwood.

RES: Would you say on the order of 50 or more like 20, or more like 10?

I: Probably another dozen.

RES: What we're getting at there is we're trying to figure out how many fishermen and fishing families that the commercial fishing industry might have supported back in the 50's and 60's. What would you say there?

I: Well, I had two uncles here back then. Like I said there's probably no more than a total, but then you had the small guys [gill netting] for mackerel. So I don't know how many, there might have been no more Cape May, Wildwood, [], that area, there probably wasn't no more than 50 boats total. Couldn't have been.

RES: And they were crewed with, what 2 or 3 or 4 people per boat.

I: Yea, that was it.

RES: There's a little rough math, we say an average of 30 , 3 per boat, 50 boats, about 150 people, ballpark, not a thousand, not ten.

I: Yea, about that.

RES: How many would you say there is now?

I: I have no idea. There's a lot.

RES: Because of what, scallops?

I: Because of scallops, there's a lot of boats.

RES: Would you say there's more than there was back?

I: Oh hell, yea. I think christ, I think [] has got probably 20 himself. I don't know how many boats are around here; couple hundred, 150, 200.

RES: What do you think about the situation with gen cat 400 pound deal?

I: It's no good. It's getting over fished. It's over fishing, they're doing it. I don't know how the hell they allow that to come in. It's really, when all those boats come in, they're coming up from Florida. Well there won't be, you might see 7-8. But it's no good. I thought that when they started with these license things and all I thought they were trying to control the fisheries. They created an over fishing. They're wiping out the ocean [].

RES: Do you see that on the water?

I: You can see it now. I've talked to that XXXX on that XXXX, he's off 15-20 bags a day from last year.

RES: Is he fishing now, or scalloping?

I: Yea, he's out, he's in now, he just come in the other day. He could see. I try and rush and get my trips done, I don't want to work anymore. A lot of guys will stretch them out, so they spread it out. So he's been out. That's what he told me the other day, he said I can see 15-20 bag difference in that.

RES: So what was the March 1 starting point you were talking about, what's that?

I: That's when the new 06 starts.

RES: Okay, I see.

I: For a lot of guys, thing is you kept five, you had five days they called carryover. So okay, you go out February 25th or something and you can run into that new, your new time period.

RES: Okay, the guys were fishing January, February for scallops, they're either using up last year's, the other five, or doing what you just said.

I: Then they're coming in to the new season.

RES: Some people are reporting at least, XXXX is reporting,

I: That's what he told me, he can see the difference. And it is, come one, I don't know how many, you see them either running in and out, running in and out and they're even complaining, it's like jeeze, where can I go get some scallops. Well when you wipe them up, that's it, they're gone. Just like, you know, even the council and all, okay this, I'm going to say this: mismanagement here. They had Hudson Canyon closed area. It was fine, I mean it was nice, there was scallop in it. They depleted it they wiped it out. Why, now that closed area, is not a closed area anymore. It's open. Why didn't they leave it alone? Why over fish it? I believe those scallops from there is what was producing the other scallops for the open bottom.

RES: Why do you believe that?

I: Because there was a large amount of scallop in there and they were breeding and all and I believe that spat, I guess they call it the spat, that's what was coming in and that's why you seen scalloping.

RES: Okay, you think that was like a source for?

I: I know it was. It has to be.

RES: Would you see richer scalloping grounds around the edges of that or, I mean it does make a lot of sense to me, but looking for catch rates around the outside, were they better than?

I: Well, yea, you know what the whole deal was? If this was the line, you were always trying to get closer, cause there was a lot of scalloping in the course, in the Hudson Canyon area. Now the boats who are in it are pushing the line to get in the open []. Now they got what they call the elephant trunk. They were projecting, seven trips in there. What do they want to do? Clean that up to? I thought you were trying to conserve the fishery. Why clean things up?

RES: You talked very well about your experience in the [] history. What was the first regulations that affected you in scalloping? Was it the meat count, or?

I: The meat count yea that was part of the first one. That was a tough one. I tell you there wasn't that much scallops going on in the early 90's. This was a [] area. We were up in New England, we were targeting more monk fish than I was scallops. We were getting nice fish, but we were targeting more monk fish as opposed to scallops.

RES: Were you gill netting, or what were you?

I: No, it was []

RES: And you were getting a lot of monk fish. How much could you land of [] fish and monk fish?

I: We [] probably around 30,000 pounds.

RES: Wow! Were a lot of guys doing this?

I: You know what I think it was? The mentality with a lot of guys, they were looking for scallops and they started realizing, if somebody made a [] where I was and there was only a couple baskets of scallops there, and they saw a few monks, they didn't leave but they were looking for scallops. We were selling the livers too, we were getting 6-7 dollars a pound for liver. So those two years up there we done good.

RES: What years was that?

I: 91, 92.

RES: Are you still doing any monking, or?

I: Well, now you're limited to 2-300 pounds a day, or maybe 400 pounds.

RES: Oh, as a by catch.

I: As a by catch.

RES: So you don't have a monk permit?

I: Yea, I got a monk, I forget what a category I am. If I wanted to go strictly monk fishing I'd have to use my days at sea.

RES: Are there any other fisheries that you haven't described that you've been a participant in? You mentioned butter fish is a smaller one, you mentioned squid, and mackerel?

I: Yea, that's been pretty much it. The flounder, squid. One summer I tried [] cause I didn't have

refrigeration, but otherwise I didn't keep them, we'd lose a lot.

RES: Before you said the challenges, when you began what were the challenges in fishing?

I: Put a roof over your head (laugh).

RES: Just catching fish and making money?

I: Making ends meet. Nobody got rich.

RES: What about now?

I: Now it's pretty lucrative. It's good, still good. That's why I hate to see it go to hell.

RES: Definitely don't ask for numbers, but your profitability over time, has it gone up steadily since the 60's, were there any periods when it went down and went back up?

I: Well, when I first built this boat in the 80's I wouldn't have said []. There were boats that went to Alaska scalloping.

RES: Why was it bad, because you spent so much money on a new boat or?

I: No, there wasn't any scallops.

RES: But you were still doing some dragging at that point.

I: Yea, it's when I started doing dragging.

RES: Started doing dragging?

I: Well, with this boat. Because when I built it, that wasn't my attention – scalloping. But in the early 80's they went down hill, every thing went down hill.

RES: So you could rig out a boat pretty easily with rigs for scalloping to go dragging.

I: Yea. Even now, I could change over in two days I could switch from one to another, if I wanted.

RES: So a scallop engine, the engine that you'd use to fishing business, to pull a drag?

I: Oh yea, on this boat.

RES: You mentioned that you used to go up, when you were dragging a lot, to New England. You're not really doing that much, anymore?

I: No, since I haven't been dragging. Right now, if I had my gear on and I could pack where I wanted and landed what I wanted, or where it was good enough, I'd be up there now, flounder fishing.

RES: In the winter?

I: Yea. But see that fishery has come back too, so maybe I wouldn't have to be going that far. There's a lot of flounder around. But, I mean that was, I would start here and just keep working my way up until I found what I wanted. If I didn't have to go that far, I didn't go.

RES: So generally flounder, where they're found here earlier in the year and then to the north later?

I: Yea. They might be up there all winter, but you know, why go up there if you can catch here.

RES: Have you ever been really involved in fishers management?

I: No.

RES: Do you go to meetings?

I: Oh yea, I go to meetings and all.

RES: Have you always done that?

I: Recently, yea over the past probably 10 years when they really started having the council meetings, if I could make them. If they were really, really, really important than if I had to stay in, I would stay in to make the meeting.

RES: Do you think most people are doing that?

I: Probably more the owner/operator.

RES: So skippers don't bother?

I: They'll go but I don't think they're going to take a trip off to do it. Why would they when the dock owns the both, that guy has representatives.

RES: How about the way you crewed your boat has that changed over time? I know you used to have a bigger crew in scalloping?

I: Well now were limited to 17 people.

RES: What about where they come from? Your crew when you started, where did they come from? Were they all from Cape May, or?

I: When I first when scalloping in the early 70's I had crews from Virginia, because they were more accustomed to scalloping and all. Nobody really scalloped in Cape May then. So I got my crews out of Virginia. Then,

RES: Because they were better cutters, or?

I: Well they were experienced in cutting and all. I mean if nobody scalloped here nobody knew how to cut. And there wasn't that many young people around either. When I first started, I was 21 years old when I was captain. There wasn't new young people, it was the older people that you had for crews and all. But as scalloping came in the more younger guys came in.

RES: So now you crew them with Cape May people?

I: I've got, lets see, I've got 4 Cape May guys and I've got 3 Vietnamese guys. Who live in Vietnam. They go over there in the winter.

RES: Oh my gosh, that's a long way to travel.

I: Yea, but they make the money and they got families.

RES: Is that common, a lot of people do that, Vietnamese or Mexican, or?

I: I do that. The reason I done that is because it started to be a big drug problem here. I didn't want to get involved with drug heads, or whatever you call them. Because one time we were getting ready to sail and it was like six of them in a van smoking. And I guess their attitude is well screw him. So there's four Vietnamese walking down the dock, they ask me for a job, I said you got all your gear, and they said, yup

and they had been scalloping, so I says come on and we pull out. And the guys open up that door of the van.

RES: Staggerng out...

I: It reminded me of a movie. One of those movies..

RES: Fast Times at Ridgemont High?

I: Yea, that was it. They come out of the van, and go, heh, where you going? And we just kept going. Ever since then, I had as high as 5 Vietnamese on. They all want to work. They fell down, they don't get hurt. Somebody else falls down, next thing their ready to sue you. Different mentality, different working. You see it around here. They used to have the Irish years ago and all, not it's mostly eastern European kids, Russians and all, working summer jobs. It's a different work ethic.

RES: Are you the only one doing that, or are there a lot of people that are hiring people from away?

I: Maybe I'm a little bit more than the others. You can see it. There's a lot of Vietnamese around. But there's a good guy, I'm not saying the American boat have a majority of them, but they'll have maybe one or two.

RES: What about your marketing and distribution, has that changed over time? When you were in the 60's say, when you were dragging, where did your fish go?

I: Fish went mostly to probably New York, Philadelphia, Fulton Fish Market. Scallop now is going to fish processors. I don't know that much about that end of it. They're going to the processors, and they're processing them and they freeze them and package them. Where they're going from there, I guess they're going all over the world.

RES: So, as far as your concerned, the scallops come off the boat here and you get your check and?

I: I don't care where they go, I don't care who...

RES: What about the infra structure that's available to you, the haul outs and welding shops, has that changed much?

I: Yea, there's probably more welders around and all. For major work, like we got the railway here, we can get it here for, get haul out and cleaned up and all. Any major bottom work and all, you got to go out of town. I used to go to Virginia. I guess there's a place in Port Chester now.

RES: Port Chester?

I: You know where that is?

RES: No.

I: It's about a half an hour drive from here, it's up in off the Delaware Bay.

RES: Has that always been the case. If your fishing in Cape May you have to go away for major repair?

I: No, it wasn't that way before cause the railway they had, that's family owned, they were all wood workers and all and all the boats were wood. In fact, my father's boat was built in Cape May. So as the boats got bigger and more steel and all, this railway here didn't, what would you say, Dance with the Progress, some saying. But we have good welders. This guy we've got here, he's top notch. So welders is not a problem. If I need some major, major boat work out of the water, then I got to go somewhere else.

RES: What about electronics?

I: Electronics is no problem. There's more technicians and all.

RES: How have you found adapting to all the electronics that have come on?

I: It, you get used to it. Yea, we got a lot of electronics now. It's all satellite.

RES: Oh yea, I see the decks of some of these boats, or the wheelhouse of some of these boats..

I: Yea, it's all satellite. You know we got satellite phones, we got satellite T.V., I got satellite every damn thing.

RES: When you started you weren't using any of that stuff?

I: There was nothing, we didn't even know where you were half the time.

RES: Compass and a watch?

I: No, we had the Loran.

RES: Was it the Loran A at that point?

I: Yea, they were surplus. Then they crapped out. You could be off a mile or two, you didn't know exactly where you were, especially at night time.

RES: How do you find that, fishing with all the electronics?

I: I like it.

RES: Why?

I: It just takes all the guess work out of it. And that's maybe why there's so many fishermen. (Laugh)

RES: I heard that before.

I: I don't have a problem with that. It takes all the guess work out of it. I mean hell now on my radar, punch in the target, I know how fast he's going. I know how close he's doing to come to me. He's 12 miles away and I know exactly what's going to happen.

RES: Are you talking about the guess work in terms of safety and other [] out there, or the fishing part of it, or both?

I: Yea the safety affects you. It's both.

RES: You have your product, how you were, the fish were one time, you can go back to that spot.

I: Yea, and you know you were accurate. I can, within five feet, I'm right back on my line.

RES: What about the health of the resources? Do you think that there are any fisheries that are doing better than they used to be, doing worse than they used to be, or about the same or what do you? You mentioned scallops for example, what do you think, just within the last year you've heard anyway?

I: Well scallops always go in cycles anyway. Kinds of seems that way. Right now it's a good time. In the late 70's there was a lot of boats getting in to the scalloping then too. Came up out of the Gulf and..

RES: Around when you did, you were in the early 70's I guess.

I: Yea, right. After I bought that one boat, that XXXX, every time I'd come in I'd see another boat. It's almost like now every time you come in you see another boat, where the hell did he come from. I don't blame anybody, you got to make a living and you're going to do what you got to do, but I don't think we can support another 500 boats coming up out of the Gulf.

RES: Make sure I got my story straight, when you left, in the 60's, you were originally dragging and you sort of got out of that because you wanted to be a little bit closer to home, scalloping looked like a good opportunity at that time. Was fishing going down at that time?

I: No, I don't think it was going down. It was just to get in to another industry. I think it was more steady, scalloping was always more steady. Then again in 65 they had that big, big boom year down off of Virginia. The Canadians were coming down out of Nova Scotia.

RES: Boom year in what?

I: Scallops. And then it dried up. When I was up in New Bedford, I was up there in 67, 68, I think there was only like 15 scallopers. Everybody had changed over and they were all draggers.

RES: You mean in the whole fishery or the whole?

I: The whole seaboard fishery, I don't think there was more than 15 boats. I know there was guys building new boats and then they converted them over to dragging. A lot of the guys that were on the boats dragging were ex scallopers.

RES: And then it stayed good until you entered in 72?

I: Then, after 65, it went to hell.

RES: Then why did you get in, I mean if in 72 it went to hell?

I: That's in 65, after 65 I don't know what happened, it's like you shut the light switch off, scalloping just went down. I was a kid and so I didn't know too much what really was up. Then scalloping started picking up again, what did I say, 72.

RES: What kind of an investment was that like, getting the money together to buy a boat at the age of 21? Was it hard to get the financing for that or who was, was the government helping, or?

I: Yea, I had a government guaranteed loan. I guess I got it off my strength and because I had been in the fishing business.

RES: Was that a private bank that did that?

I: Well, yea, I think when you get those guaranteed loans, cause it's backed by the government, I think they find you a lending institution.

RES: So there was a government program at that time that you went to and said I'm a fisherman and I want to have, you know, and then they look at your history and everything?

I: Yes. Well, I funded my other boat by myself. When my father's boat got sold, that XXXX, I bought a steel boat, XXXX. That was private. When I build this in 1980, this is a government guarantee.

RES: Do you think they're still doing that?

I: I know they are, cause I got something in the mail the other day. I think they'll also guarantee dock side,

to the docks and all.

RES: For structure on the water front?

I: Yea. Cause I got a letter not too long ago that said it's available. Not that I'm interested.

RES: What do you think about what's happening to Cape May as a community, has that changed a lot over the years? There's condos everywhere now and a lot of rec boats out there. Is that changing the community in your view?

I: Yea, everybody is getting out of the city and they're moving down here. But I don't think that has anything to do with the fishing industry.

RES: Why not?

I: Well, people are coming down here to retire.

RES: People from Philadelphia?

I: Philadelphia, New York or wherever else they're coming from. Every time you turn around there's new houses, they're tearing old house down and building new

[]

RES: How does that affect you, that fact that ever body goes in to the same area, does that affect your profitability, does that affect your safety?

I: Safety maybe a little bit, it's a pain in the ass when you got all these boats there. If you're going to have closed areas, why not rotate them a little bit more? Why have all the New England fleet come down here? Why should all the Carolina, Virginia, and New Jersey go up there? If you have a closed area here, open up one here or open one up there, thin it out a little bit.

RES: But your concern with that is a concern for the resource?

I: For the resource. Why go to New England if I don't have to. Hell, I can go to the Elephant Trunk here in three hours.

RES: You would prefer that the closed areas that were closer to you, were available to you and the areas that were closer to the New England people were available to them?

I: Sure, or if you got the options, the guy wants to come down here, he can come down. He's got a choice. Why just open up the one, knock it out, deplete it again? But see then you got the damn environmentalists, they get involved. I think that's one reason why they change only one trip in to Nantucket. I think the environmentalists have some kind of suit they won.

RES: What do you think the relationship is like between the environmentalists and the commercial fishing industry?

I: I don't know, look on the T.V. when that, what the hell was her name, when they cut the feeding tube off of her. People just want to get involved, probably have no idea what they're talking about. You get somebody from Kansas City, Kansas, he's going to tell me about my resources? I don't go over there and tell them I don't like the way they kill the cows.

RES: A lot of it is ignorance?

I: I think it's just people have nothing else to damn do and they want to get involved and they've got

money.

RES: Do you think that relationship is getting better or worse over time?

I: I really don't know. Any more, this might sound ignorant, I just kinda do my thing, I just put my blinders on. I've lost interest in it.

RES: Because it's frustrating?

I: I'm getting tired of it. I've been fishing over 40 years. I'm tired of it. I think I'm just, I'm like an old cat, I sees a mouse go by and I don't go after him any more. It's like I'm just going to lay in the sun for awhile.

RES: There's nothing wrong with laying in the sun.

I: If I want a mouse to eat, I'll go catch the damn thing and eat it. I think that's the way I'm starting to be.

RES: You must still like fishing?

I: Yea, I like it, I guess it's in my blood, but you get tired of it.

RES: You can see the end?

I: Yea, absolutely, the light at the end of the tunnel. I had a heart attack last January too. I was headed out to, I bought a 5th wheel trailer. Do you know what that is?

RES: No.

I: It's a camper, it's the ones that hook on the back of the pick up truck. It's 35 feet long. So I was headed out for Arizona and Texas and all, figuring I was going to spend three, four months out there. Damn it I get in to Mississippi and I had a heart attack. So that killed that.

RES: Ahhh. So you were off for a relaxing vacation and you had a heart attack.

I: I couldn't believe it, I was more pissed off than anything. So, like I said, I'm over the hump and I'm just kind of here.

RES: We usually end up the interview asking if there's anything I didn't ask about that you think we need to know? About commercial fishing and the regulations?

I: Yea, I think we covered everything. I just hope they manage it right that's all. They got a control limit. I went to the last meeting they had here a couple of weeks ago. There was some guys from Georgia and stuff, and you know what happened with a lot of this 400 pounds stuff. There was people getting in to it who weren't even fishermen. They were, I don't know what the hell they done before. Maybe they built bulldozers. So now they got a 400 pound boat. But they couldn't control any one, it's November []. Then you got a guy saying well, and they were buying boats after, I know guys that boats after that control thing.

RES: After they announced the control...

I: Sure, and they still got in to it. It was like, you know, I paid \$900,000 for this boat in 1980. There was no guarantee I was going to make it. Scalloping dried up so I went dragging, I done that. There is no guarantee, you buy any business, there's no guarantee but then you got a guy saying I just spent \$100,000, what am I supposed to do now? Well, go do something else. You know when they got these, they'll have a permit, sell the permit, buy a permit. That's what everybody else is doing now. So I don't feel sorry for them now, especially with a control date, you go buying a boat with a control date, and what are you going to have on the back of your mind? Oh well, they'll change that. They're not going to change that. It takes

so long for them to put these laws in, so they put in a control date and they're going to stick with it, or they should stick with it.

RES: Think they will?

I: They got to. I mean that was the idea of the control date. What's ever body gonna cry, I bought a boat. Well if you bought it; be like hell, you can't build no more houses in Cape May after that date and then you go buy a million dollar lot, I guess that's your fault. That's the way I feel about it. Tough. Just like anything, you can buy any business, buy a pizza shop. Who says you're going to survive. There's a lot of pizza shops around. I don't know how they make it. Maybe they're selling something else. How many pizza shops can you have in an area?

RES: And they sell for like \$9.00 a pizza.

I: Yea, you got to sell a lot of pizza. That's pretty much it then. It's getting over fished. Well, they'll find out, if it dries up and when it dries up, it dries up, it's like you set a switch; and it will be the whole coast; boom, shut down.

RES: You think that's a natural cycle, you mentioned that earlier?

I: It's happened. I've seen it happen a couple of times. They used to say a seven year cycle.

RES: That's what they say about mackerel up in Newfoundland. The mackerel come in every seven years or so.

I: And they say the same thing about the scallops. Maybe it won't happen if they manage it right, if they close the areas. But they got to spawn from somewhere.

RES: You have to have big scallops to have little scallops.

I: Yea and I don't care. They screwed up, the council or whoever was involved with this, helped to plan it, they screwed up, they should be held liable.

RES: What exactly did they do that you...

I: They allowed too many trips to come in here.

RES: It was a closed area

I: It was a closed area. In the whole plan, if I got it right, it was like, we'll get whatever figures they come by and then it will be an open area. What the hell is the idea now?

RES: I'm not sure I understand what you meant there.

I: They had it in their mind when they drew up that plan, Hudson Canyon, we're going to allow three trips in, so many trips in. Then when it's all depleted we take the fence away and it's considered open bottom.

RES: That's what they did?

I: That's what they done.

RES: You think it should have been left as though?

I: It should have been left as a closed area.

RES: You're alright with the amount of fishing that happened there, it was just?

I: No, they allowed too much fishing in it. They were allowing too many trips. They could have shut it down for another year or two.

RES: Is it now going to be open bottom?

I: It's open bottom. I don't know...

RES: How many years it's going to last...

I: I don't know, I have no idea, but they ought to leave it the hell alone. It was a nice, there was a lot of scalloping. But when you tell a boat that you've got five trips in the Hudson Canyon, well the guys gotta make his trips so he's got to go in.

RES: Why does he have to make his trips?

I: Well, if you're allowed five closed area trips in Hudson Canyon, and 30 open day trips, so if you don't go in there what are you going to do just work 30 days for the year. You're going to go in and try get your trips.

RES: You could, somebody could do that, right?

I: Do what?

RES: Not go in there for the five trips.

I: That's right, so then there's no sense [] you might as well just tie up and sell your boat.

RES: Right, with all those boat payments and everything else you got to make.

I: Yea, and it's really a shame and I hope they don't screw up this Elephant Trunk cause I think they were talking like 5 or 7 trips in there. Then they'll wipe that out. So what the hell is the sense in closing?

RES: What do you think about how the council works in general? Do you think that structure is all right?

I: I'm not really the guy to talk about it. I really, really don't follow it.

RES: Not that involved with it.

I: Yea. That's why you should have talked to that XXXX, he's..

RES: Yea, well, we're still working on it.

I: You want these right? I'll send you...

RES: Well, we're done. I'm sorry about that, yakking away here. Anything else you want to add before I?

I: No that's it.